

Mental health courts

Benefit-cost estimates updated December 2015. Literature review updated May 2014.

Current estimates replace old estimates. Numbers will change over time as a result of model inputs and monetization methods.

The WSIPP benefit-cost analysis examines, on an apples-to-apples basis, the monetary value of programs or policies to determine whether the benefits from the program exceed its costs. WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies has three main steps. First, we determine "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using a statistical technique called meta-analysis. Second, we calculate whether the benefits of a program exceed its costs. Third, we estimate the risk of investing in a program by testing the sensitivity of our results. For more detail on our methods, see our [technical documentation](#).

Program Description: Mental health courts, modeled after other therapeutic courts (e.g., drug courts, DUI courts), divert offenders with mental health issues from incarceration to treatment in the community. These courts utilize mental health assessments, individualized treatment plans, intensive case management, and judicial monitoring to provide participants with the resources needed to avoid criminal behavior while improving public safety. In some courts, charges are dropped with successful completion of the program. Programs can vary in length sometimes up to 24 months.

Benefit-Cost Summary

Program benefits		Summary statistics	
Participants	(\$1)	Benefit to cost ratio	\$6.17
Taxpayers	\$5,856	Benefits minus costs	\$15,764
Other (1)	\$11,558	Probability of a positive net present value	100 %
Other (2)	\$1,402		
Total	\$18,816		
Costs	(\$3,051)		
Benefits minus cost	\$15,764		

The estimates shown are present value, life cycle benefits and costs. All dollars are expressed in the base year chosen for this analysis (2014). The economic discount rates and other relevant parameters are described in our [technical documentation](#).

Detailed Monetary Benefit Estimates

Source of benefits	Benefits to				
	Participants	Taxpayers	Other (1)	Other (2)	Total benefits
From primary participant					
Crime	\$0	\$5,856	\$11,558	\$2,925	\$20,339
Adjustment for deadweight cost of program	(\$1)	\$0	\$0	(\$1,523)	(\$1,524)
Totals	(\$1)	\$5,856	\$11,558	\$1,402	\$18,816

We created the two "other" categories to report results that do not fit neatly in the "participant" or "taxpayer" perspectives. In the "Other (1)" category we include the benefits of reductions in crime victimization, the economic spillover benefits of improvement in human capital outcomes, and the benefits from private or employer-paid health insurance. In the "Other (2)" category we include estimates of the net changes in the value of a statistical life and net changes in the deadweight costs of taxation.

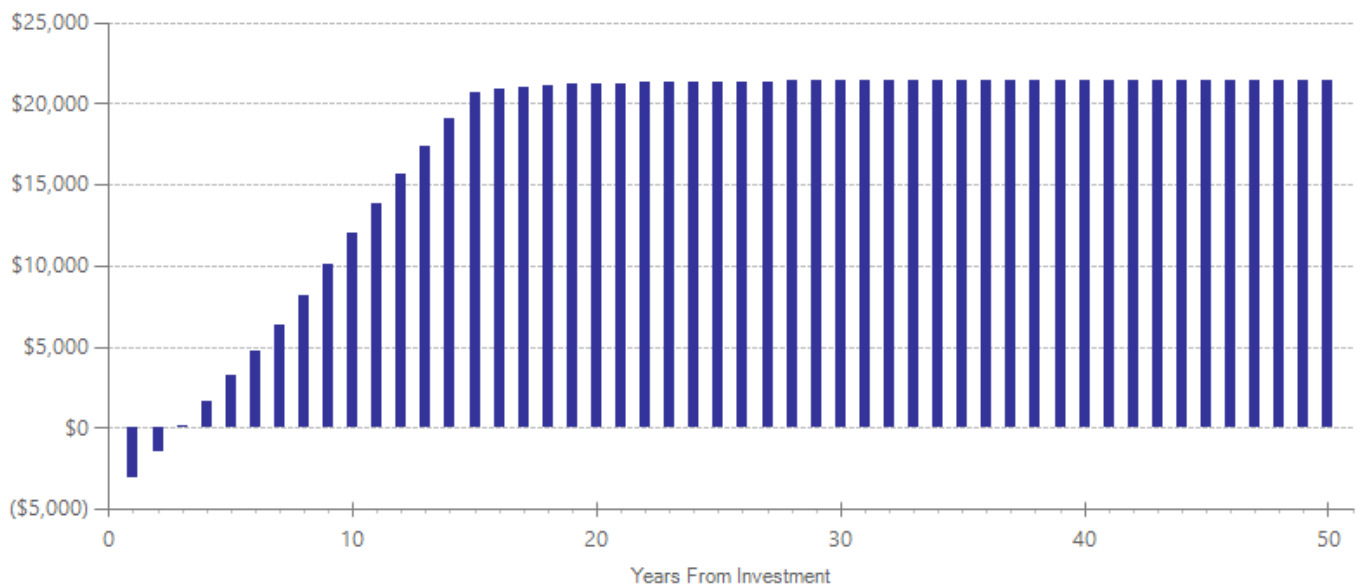
Detailed Cost Estimates

	Annual cost	Program duration	Year dollars	Summary statistics	
Program costs	\$2,656	1	2006	Present value of net program costs (in 2014 dollars)	(\$3,051)
Comparison costs	\$0	1	2006	Uncertainty (+ or - %)	10 %

Estimated from Ridgely, M.S., Engberg, J., Greenberg, M.D., Turner, S., DeMartini, C., & Dembosky, J.W. (2007). Justice, treatment, and cost: An evaluation of the fiscal impact of Allegheny County Mental Health Court. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

The figures shown are estimates of the costs to implement programs in Washington. The comparison group costs reflect either no treatment or treatment as usual, depending on how effect sizes were calculated in the meta analysis. The uncertainty range is used in Monte Carlo risk analysis, described in our [technical documentation](#).

Cumulative Net Cash Flows Over Time (Non-Discounted Dollars)



Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	Primary or secondary participant	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)		Adjusted effect sizes and standard errors used in the benefit-cost analysis					
						First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated		
				ES	p-value	ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age
Crime	Primary	6	1424	-0.223	0.001	-0.223	0.068	38	-0.223	0.068	48
Psychiatric symptoms	Primary	2	212	-0.309	0.359	-0.309	0.337	38	0.000	0.000	39

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

- Boothroyd, R. A., Mercado, C. C., Poythress, N. G., Christy, A., & Petrila, J. (2005). Clinical outcomes of defendants in mental health court. *Psychiatric Services*, 56(7), 829-834.
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- Moore, M. E., & Hiday, V. A. (2006). Mental health court outcomes: A comparison of re-arrest and re-arrest severity between mental health court and traditional court participants. *Law and Human Behavior*, 30(6), 659-674.

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